



**Rep. Richard
DeBolt**

2001 Session Review

*Serving citizens in Lewis,
Thurston and Pierce counties*



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Dear Friends,

The 2001 Legislature has adjourned for the year. Though the regular session and three overtimes were a mixed bag of ups and downs for your 20th District team, we did succeed in enacting important legislation for the people of Southwest Washington. In some instances, our success was stopping harmful legislation.

Through our efforts, it is now illegal to possess large quantities of the materials that can be made into the destructive drug methamphetamine. Unfortunately, meth abuse has reached epidemic proportions in our area. We hope this new law helps stop the "cookers" from obtaining more materials to spread their evil throughout the community.

The state's final operating budget contains serious flaws and remains unsustainable. However, we were successful in stopping a Senate proposal to raid a pension fund for law enforcement officers and firefighters. The Senate Democrats' plan to balance their budget on the backs of people who risked their lives to protect the public was simply unacceptable.

However, it was transportation that overshadowed the 2001 Legislature. We understand the frustrations caused by traffic congestion, but remain unwilling to support a transportation plan without assurances it will be a true investment in our state. Throughout the process, we have been very clear that our priority was a revenue package that also improved efficiency and accountability in transportation.

This session review provides an overview of these and other topics we addressed this year – issues that will have an impact on you and your family. If you have any questions or comments, please call either of our offices, e-mail or send a letter. We thank you for the opportunity and look forward to reading your comments.

Rep. Richard DeBolt
Republican Floor Leader

Rep. Gary Alexander
Co-chair, Capital
Budget Committee

Rep. Richard DeBolt



Rep. Richard DeBolt served this year as House Republican Floor Leader. Here he discusses legislation with House Co-Speaker Clyde Ballard.

ENERGY

The historic and comprehensive energy package approved by the Legislature this session combines sensible conservation measures with a focus on new power. The House legislation also appropriates an additional \$2.5 million for low-income energy assistance, helping the families and senior citizens being hurt the worst by these huge rate increases. We supported and passed a package that offers both short- and long-term relief to energy consumers.

The package focuses on bringing more power to the state by:

- *Allowing larger power plants to be built without the slow and complicated permitting process — cuts red tape.*
- *Helping older power plants meet environmental regulations so they can operate longer periods each day.*
- *Encouraging the aluminum companies to build their own on-site power plants to free up additional power for everyone else.*

Republicans worked hard for this package. We will continue to look toward the future and do more to meet our state's most vital energy needs.

CRACKING DOWN ON CRIME

DRUG ABUSE

Methamphetamine is the fastest-growing drug problem in our state. Part of the reason is that the drug is cheap and easy to make. In fact, most of this toxic drug's ingredients can be purchased over the counter at the local store. Known as precursor drugs, they are common ingredients in some cold medications or fertilizer.

In 1998, there were 349 meth labs in our state. The number of labs reported for the year 2000 reached 1,449 — an increase of over 400% in just 3 years.

This year, the Legislature passed, and the governor signed, a law making it a crime for retailers or pharmacies to sell more than three grams or three packages of precursor drugs to a person in a 24-hour period.

Unfortunately, legislation adding the crime of manufacturing meth to the "Three Strikes" list died. It is clear that this serious crime deserves a serious deterrent, and we succeeded in half of the battle.

IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft is one of the few crimes that increased last year. Washington has consistently ranked in the top five nationally in the number of identity theft crimes. This shows us that we need to take a serious look at what this state is doing to both prevent and punish those who use personal information to commit fraud or theft.

A bill to establish an identity theft task force within the Washington State Patrol fell victim to the tie of 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats that exists in the House of Representatives.

However, we did pass a law that places additional restrictions on collection agencies and credit reporting agencies. This will make it easier for victims of identity theft to retrieve information from credit reporting agencies and banks to clear their damaged credit history.

The Washington State Attorney General's Office produces documents detailing how to protect you from identity theft, or, what to do if your wallet is stolen. Call either of our offices for copies of this information.

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YOUR 2001 - 03 STATE BUDGETS

OPERATING

We voted against a \$22.8 billion budget that spends \$681 million more than expected revenue. The 2001-03 budget is reminiscent of the earthquake we felt in Olympia because it will bring with it an aftershock that will force tax increases or service cuts to you, the citizens of Washington. Already, residents in the 20th District are facing high energy costs and a weak economy. This unsustainable budget adds to this unfortunate situation. It is simply unfair to the citizens.

This budget is similar to the budget the Legislature passed in 1991 which spent \$490 million more than revenue. It was followed in 1993 by the largest tax increase in state history. This year's plan also raids our state's reserves, leaving us with a savings account of less than 1 percent of total revenue in the 'rainy day fund.'

We tried to convince our Democrat colleagues to make the choice of restraint and smaller government. Projections estimate that two years from now we could face a **\$1.7 billion** deficit. This budget is simply a recipe for a financial disaster.

House Republicans were committed to collaborating with Democrats to responsibly address the state's financial future, but, with Democrats in control of the Senate and governor's office, while the Republicans only voice was a 49-49 tie in the House, Senate budget negotiators walked away and our efforts were dismissed.

CAPITAL

The capital budget provides money for the construction and repair of public buildings and other long-term investments. The capital budget also includes state money for infrastructure, housing, and cultural and heritage facilities. It was here where fiscal responsibility and sound thinking prevailed.

Although emergencies such as earthquakes and ecoterrorism attacks at colleges forced legislators to stretch the dollars, we made good decisions that represent a true investment in Washington's K-12 and higher education systems, and natural resources.

The 2001-03 capital budget provides more than \$408 million for K-12 education construction, and \$650 million for higher education construction, going a long way to provide our children with buildings that help prepare them for the future and keep them safe. Plus, it provides for adults who would like to go back to school in order to build a better future for their family.

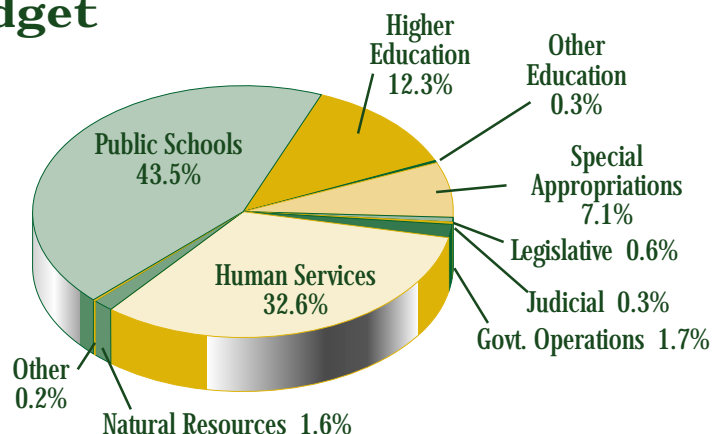
Some of the highlights include:

- \$7.2 million for Centralia College
- \$8.9 million for South Puget Sound Community College
- \$46.8 million for The Evergreen State College
- \$83 million for renovations to the Capitol Campus
- \$130,000 for the Hands On Children's Museum
- \$2.2 million for Heritage Park
- \$183 million to preserve forests, acquire and restore parks and promote conservation
- \$65 million in housing assistance for the developmentally disabled, self-help programs, and victims of domestic violence
- \$229 million to improve water resources for salmon, agriculture and personal use

2001 - 03 State Operating Budget

General Fund - State Total	\$22,786,783
Projected revenue	\$22,105,600
Difference	-\$681 million

Questions? Call the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 or contact our offices through the numbers listed on the front cover.



Rep. Gary Alexander

HEALTH CARE: ACCESS AND QUALITY

SUPPORT IN RURAL AREAS

Throughout the state, we must have schools and health care facilities to be economically viable. However, many hospitals in rural communities are struggling to survive. And, if they close, we won't get them back. This session the Legislature approved measures to help keep rural hospitals open and available for our citizens who depend on their services.

PRESCRIPTION RELIEF FOR SENIORS

As prescription medication costs increase, a growing number of seniors in our state are finding it difficult to afford the medications they need. Reducing the cost of drugs is like conserving energy: just part of the solution, and not a long-term solution in itself. We would like to see drug costs controlled, and realize our seniors need assistance. Unfortunately, the Democrats opposed all of the Republican proposals to provide prescription assistance for senior citizens this session.



Rep. Gary Alexander, who serves as Co-Chair of the Capital Budget Committee, delivers a floor speech this year on the benefits of the capital budget's true investment in our state.

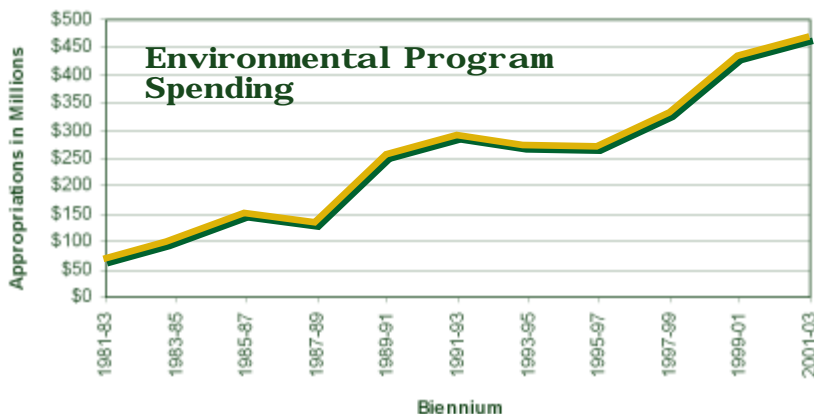
A MORE EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

The citizens have sent a clear message to the Legislature – change the way government does business. Agencies should be continually identifying and re-evaluating all programs and regulations to make sure they are working as intended.

PERFORMANCE- BASED BUDGETS

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) is authorized to conduct performance, fiscal and compliance audits of state agencies and departments. This year, we attempted to pass legislation that authorized JLARC and the state auditor to review how certain state agencies are using their resources. Due to budget restraints, this bill wasn't allowed a vote, but we will work to reintroduce it next year.

However, we did pass a law that gives JLARC the authority to examine the number of agencies requesting funding for natural resources programs. JLARC reviewed 12 capital budget programs and found that using an investment approach, we can gather information to determine whether the investments have been effective.



The JLARC report made several recommendations that will ensure the funding agencies work together to achieve goals and coordinate with other agencies as much as possible. Performance measure requirements also apply to programs administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife related to protecting or recovering fish stocks that are funded by the capital budget.

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BUILDING THE ECONOMY

IN OUR AREA...

One of the most important laws approved this year was the one we sponsored to provide for industrial land banks outside urban growth areas in specified counties. This measure provides for industrial land banks outside urban growth areas in Lewis County, making the area more attractive for large employers.

In 1998, we sponsored a pilot program allowing certain counties to create the industrial land banks. But, the legislation expired Dec. 31, 1999, just as Lewis County was attempting to designate a parcel of reclaimed mining property.

We hope the availability of this land gives people a reason to want to stay in Lewis County and entice companies to move to the area.



AND THROUGHOUT THE STATE...

With a 49-49 tie in the House and Democrats controlling the Senate and governor's office, protecting Washington's business community by preventing harmful legislation from passing was an important responsibility of House Republicans these past sessions.

Unfortunately, we were unable to block the implementation of new ergonomics rules. However, we're excited to reports that the Shorelines Hearings Board invalidated the Department of Ecology's update to the Shoreline Management Act. The proposed rules are the most restrictive and onerous land-use regulations ever passed in Washington. We believe that more businesses will leave our state and more jobs will be lost if we do not address government over-regulation.

Republican leaders have sent a letter to Gov. Gary Locke asking him to abide by the board's decision and abandon efforts to implement the new shoreline rules without legislative approval. We remain disappointed that DOE largely dismissed the overwhelming opposition to the proposed rules.

These two new sets of standards both represent an enormous unfunded mandate on families and business, especially labor-intensive businesses like manufacturing and farming. We will keep fighting these, and other bills that stifle this state's economy.

EDUCATION: SUCCESS FOR EVERY CHILD

Ensuring that every child in Washington is given the opportunity to succeed is perhaps the most important task legislators face. The voters of this state made a strong statement regarding the importance they place on education and we have worked this year to make sure this voice was heard in Olympia. Along with the funding we pushed for in the operating and capital (facilities) budgets, we worked to pass legislation to make sure our children receive the best education possible.

QUALITY TEACHERS

It's no secret that Washington faces a dire teacher shortage – one that will only worsen if we do nothing. One of the last pieces of legislation approved this year allowed retired teachers to return to the classroom without affecting their pension. As we saw our state's retired teachers heading to Oregon to teach, we decided it was time for this law to make sure quality teachers for hard-to fill subject areas such as math, science and special education weren't leaving our state.

We also supported and passed important legislation to open new routes to certification for potential teachers who cannot afford the time or cost of returning to college.



Rep. Richard DeBolt

Rep. Gary Alexander

TRANSPORTATION

There is no debating that Western Washington needs transportation congestion relief. Figuring out how to pay for those improvements is a difficult matter, however. We take very seriously our responsibility to find ways to stretch the taxes you pay to maximize our investments, while not placing the financial burden of reducing Seattle's congestion on the backs of Southwest Washington residents.

Since January we have pushed for transportation efficiency measures. Competitive bidding, reform of prevailing wage laws and streamlining the environmental permitting process would make transportation construction faster and less expensive. The streamlining measure has been signed into law, and it will go a long way to maximize the value of every taxpayer dollar spent to reduce the congestion that threatens our state's families and economy. However, this is the only efficiency measure the governor and our Democrat counterparts have accepted so far.

Currently, we are operating under a transportation budget comprising programs and projects funded by existing gas tax and other transportation-related revenue. On July 21, we were presented with a proposal that included a 40 percent tax increase. The plan also spent close to 25 percent of your tax dollars on a transit system that simply doesn't work.

Our goal from the beginning of this year was to develop a fair transportation plan that uses tax dollars as wisely and efficiently as possible.



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PROMOTING JOBS
TRANSPORTATION

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